

Element 7:
Personnel (I)--The Employment Decision
UPLIFT Public Library Administration, Spring 2005

>The public=s impression of the library, and their evaluation of the quality of the service they receive, will depend above all upon the staff. Consequently, personnel administration is arguably the most important aspect of library administration, filled as it is with challenges which emerge from the need to comply with numerous personnel policies at the local level, applicable laws, and the endless variety of human characteristics, behaviors and emotions.

>Personnel administration consists of the full range of activities which relate to staff members, including but not limited to: recruiting, selecting, training, evaluating, promoting, disciplining and dismissing staff members, and establishing all of the requisite policies, procedures and supporting documentation necessary to accomplish these tasks within the framework of relevant local policies and state and federal laws.

>To succeed in personnel administration, it is critical that the organization understand the type of staff members it wants in order to achieve its mission and goals and to convey its values as a service organization to the public. It is equally critical that this understanding be reflected in all personnel-related activities. In other words, a consistent picture of the characteristics and behaviors which the library desires from its staff members should emerge from job descriptions, the questions asked in employment interviews, the goals set for staff members, and the basis on which performance evaluations are conducted.

>Throughout the process of personnel administration, emphasis must always remain on the job itself. Staff members must be selected and evaluated on the basis of the work they do in terms of a position=s essential function rather than on unrelated or incidental personal characteristics, such as their physical traits, their cultural, ethnic or religious background, or their personal life choices.

>To facilitate compliance with the concepts of fair and legally-compliant personnel practices, library administrations should work from established documents which are revised as needed due to the changing nature of library positions, and which are checked as needed by other professionals, such as a personnel director, to assure that they meet local standards and legal requirements.

>When selection is made in the hiring process, it should be made with a clear sense that the administrator could articulate, if called upon to do so, the reasons for the selection in a manner which would be understandable and convincing to a fair observer. The same standard should be applied when evaluating an employee=s performance.

>Always begin a staff member=s employment with appropriate orientation and training, as he or she represents the library from the first moment of contact with the public.